Creating the Spicket River Greenway

The developing Spicket River Greenway, envisioned by our community as a three-mile long "emerald bracelet" of green spaces and walking paths connecting parks and neighborhoods, is comprised of a series of infrastructure, program, and stewardship investments made by Groundwork Lawrence and the City of Lawrence that are helping to meet the many challenges facing our community. Derived from a multi-year collaborative planning effort led by Groundwork Lawrence, the Greenway vision was identified first in 2001 and continues to serve as a guiding strategy for achieving multiple goals associated with creating a more healthy community, including: river restoration, neighborhood revitalization, civic engagement, improved public health, enhanced transit and walkability, better air quality, and increased recreational opportunity. Since 2002, Groundwork Lawrence has engaged over 3,500 people in clearing 77 tons of debris and over 1,000 tires from the banks of the Spicket River. At the same time, Groundwork Lawrence has served as project manager with the City of Lawrence Community Development Department to fundraise and leverage public dollars dedicated to the design and construction of new parks along the Spicket River Greenway: Scarito Park—the City's first brownfield-to-open space project completed in 2006, and Misserville Park and Kennedy Playstead, both constructed in 2007. Manchester Street Park is the newest jewel on the bracelet – the former brownfield site at Stevens Pond comes online in 2009. Additionally, this partnership has yielded greenway design guidelines, survey work, and preliminary design plans for the trails that will ultimately connect these new riverfront green spaces. In sum, the Spicket River Greenway has inched from vision toward reality thanks to over $5.5 million in State and local funds invested on Spicket River park projects, with an additional $2 million of planned riverside park and trail improvements in the pipeline.

Groundwork Lawrence, Inc. is a locally-based 501(c) 3 non-profit organization working to create sustainable environmental change through community-based partnerships. Groundwork's mission and operations are premised on the understanding that environmental conditions are inextricably linked to the economic and social health of a neighborhood. As a consequence, Groundwork is committed to "changing places and changing lives" through on-the-ground projects that help to transform local communities. To accomplish this, Groundwork leads and supports a variety of partnership-driven efforts that bring together the public, private and non-profit sectors to solve complex environmental problems and sustain a long-term vision for neighborhood change and renewal.

GROUNDWORK CHANGING PLACES CHANGING LIVES

Creating the Spicket River Greenway: Utilizing Persistence and "People Power" to Clean Up and Reclaim the Spicket River

2001

A concept plan for the Spicket River Greenway is developed by a Landscape Architecture student working on a project for Groundwork Lawrence. The concept plan is shared with members of the local community and met with great enthusiasm and interest.

2002

Groundwork Lawrence organizes the 1st Spicket River Cleanup. 350 volunteers remove an amazing 13 tons of debris in the pouring rain.

The Spicket River Task Force, comprised of 18 members, is formed.

A scouting mission is conducted by volunteers with the National Civilian Community Corps to document pollution and debris in and along the river.

2003

370 volunteers remove 11 tons of debris at Groundwork Lawrence's 2nd Annual Spicket River Cleanup in the pouring rain.

A study and inventory of animal species inhabiting the Spicket River is conducted by local middle school students.

2004

250 volunteers remove 8 tons of debris at Groundwork Lawrence's 3rd Annual Spicket River Cleanup in the pouring rain.

Groundwork Lawrence Green Team conducts Ecological Rapid Assessments at 10 sites along the Spicket River. Hundreds of plant and animal species utilizing the Spicket River Greenway as habitat are documented.

2005

300 volunteers remove 9 tons of debris at Groundwork Lawrence's 4th Annual Spicket River Cleanup. For the first time ever in the history of the Spicket River Cleanup, the sun shined brilliantly.

As part of the Clean Spicket Campaign, GWL installed "Spicket River – Keep It Clean" and anti-illegal dumping signage at 10 locations along the river.

GWL Green Team youth travel to the First Earth Summit for Kids on Biodiversity in Quintana Roo, Mexico to share ecological habitat data they collected along the Spicket River.

2006

300 volunteers remove 15 tons of debris at Groundwork Lawrence's 5th Annual Spicket River Cleanup in the pouring rain (again).

Dr. Nina Scarito Park is constructed and celebrated with a ribbon-cutting ceremony in October.

Groundwork Lawrence works with the Lawrence Conservation Commission to research, write, and promote the Rivers and Wetlands Bylaw, designed to limit development within 200 feet of the river's edge. The Bylaw passes with full City Council support.

2007

550 volunteers, undeterred by gray clouds and on/off rain showers, remove 17 tons of debris at Groundwork Lawrence's 6th Annual Spicket River Cleanup.

Arlington Neighborhood Park is constructed and opens in September.

Misserville Park is constructed and is celebrated with a ribbon-cutting in October.

2008

In preparation for design and construction of a new park along the developing Spicket River Greenway, the City of Lawrence acquires the former incinerator site, located at 85 Manchester Street and adjacent to Stevens Pond near Malden Mills.

The final cleanup and park design process for the future park at 85 Manchester Street (former Covanta Site) begins; park site planned for opening in fall 2009.